

# Life

## HARVARD-WESTLAKE

Anyone who knows me knows how much I love eating. So over the past 18 months, in a time when many restaurants shut their doors forever, I've been grateful to learn about several food trucks I hadn't known about before. As it turns out, some of LA's newest moveable feasts were made possible by Gabe Gamez '14 and On The Go LA, the food truck rental business he cofounded. Look out for one of his trucks on a street near you!

Cheers, Ed Hu | Head of External Relations | [ehu@hw.com](mailto:ehu@hw.com)



Gabe Gamez '14

**Gabe Gamez '14 has helped dozens of family businesses cook up new opportunities with On The Go LA. In this edition, he explains how On The Go LA got started and where it's going next.**

During COVID, I started working from home and seeing on the news how local places in my community--I was born and raised in South LA--were suffering. So in the spring of 2020, I started brainstorming creative ways to help.

**The idea came to me to do an Airbnb for food trucks.** I thought of food trucks because of the mobility and flexibility; we could bring food to people since people weren't going to restaurants anymore. I interviewed local restaurant owners and got good feedback, so I decided to jump in with a food truck rental for a month to figure out how it would work.

At first the concept was a roaming food truck like an ice cream truck, but logistically it was hard to execute, since the truck wasn't allowed on certain streets. So I pivoted to renting out a food truck on short-term basis, focusing mainly on local chefs and catering companies.

We broaden access for communities of color, enabling local businesses looking to take off to do so affordably. Personally I had no food industry experience, but my dad is from Guatemala and worked transporting bananas across Central America, and I'd always had an entrepreneurial side.



Cofounders Enrique Loyola and Gabe Gamez '14 at a PledgeLA event



On The Go LA truck

My On The Go LA partner, Enrique Loyola, and I went to elementary school together. We complement each other--he's more sales/ecommerce, I'm more on the tech side. **We've helped more than 50 businesses so far.** We won a USC Marshall School of Business pitch contest and an additional \$100,000 grant, which allowed us to buy more trucks and expand our marketing. We try to keep costs as affordable as possible for our clients to lower the barriers to entry.

We want to increase our footprint across LA with more chefs and more trucks and then gradually expand to other cities. Our service is short-term rentals, but we're looking to implement a graduate program to work with clients to get their own food truck.



Comfy Pup and Tortas El Águila on the road with On The Go LA

**A lot of our clients have never hopped on a food truck before.** The startup costs usually shut them out. Renting a food truck usually involves six- to-twelve month leases, and it's not easy to find a good truck. And we don't just give them the truck, we help them with marketing and selecting a menu and finding good locations. We make it as easy as possible for them.

I've grown up with street vendors, and a lot of them are super hardworking but have a hard time formalizing their businesses because of the high cost of permits, etc. **I wanted to level the playing field for Latinx and African-American communities and help those small mom-and-pop businesses however we can.**

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